

NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



FEDERAL LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO COMMEMORATE END OF WW II

U.S. Sens. Mike Rounds (SD), Jim Inhofe (OK), Jack Reed (RI), Tammy Duckworth (IL), Dean Heller (NV) and Gary Peters (MI) introduced *the 75th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Act*.

This legislation would establish a commemorative program to honor veterans, educate the public about the history of World War II, highlight the service of the men and women who served our nation on the home front during the war, recognize the contributions of our allies and remember the horrors of the Holocaust.

"The world owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women who led us to victory in World War II," said Rounds. "Deserving of the title *The Greatest Generation* - given to them by South Dakota's own Tom Brokaw - these men and women prepared to sac-

rifice everything to preserve our freedom and save the world. It is an honor to join my colleagues in this effort to recognize the World War II generation, whose service, courage and resolve forever changed the course of history."



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BROWN COUNTY PARTICIPATES IN RESOURCE FAIR

Brown County Veterans Service Officer Aaron Walberg and SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen participated in the 2018 Healthy Aging Resource Fair in Aberdeen last week.

The Fair is geared toward people who are close to retirement and/or their caretakers. The Fair provided us a great opportunity to visit with veterans and spouses about programs and services available to them.



SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS TO INCREASE IN 2019

Today, Social Security announced that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits for more than 67 million Americans will increase 2.8 percent in 2019.

January 2019 marks other changes that will happen based on the increase in the national average wage index. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax, as well as the retirement earnings test exempt amount, will change in 2019.

Visit their [blog](#) for details about the cost-of-living adjustment and other important news.

VETERANS STAND DOWN

The VA Black Hills Healthcare System will be sponsoring a Veterans Stand Down at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center on Thurs., Nov. 8, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (MT).

All veterans and their family members are welcome to attend. A wide variety of free items and services will be offered including employment services, legal assistance, VA benefits readjustment counseling, housing referrals, free clothing and much more. Lunch will be available.

Please bring a copy of your DD Form 214, dependent information and identification to the event.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

VFW Post 1273 is sponsoring a “Boots on the Ground” event on Sat., Nov. 3, at the VFW in Rapid City. Veterans will be able to take home new or gently used boots, coveralls, winter coats, gloves, hats, socks and toiletries.

The goal of the event is to help veterans in need, homeless or not, and provide them with essentials they may not be able to afford. If you have items to donate to the event please contact Susan at [su-san.hardina@dberadio.com](mailto:susan.hardina@dberadio.com).



HARDROCKERS FOOTBALL



The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology football game on Sat., Nov. 3, 2018, will be Military/Veterans Appreciation Day.

Hardrockers will play Chadron State at O'Harra Stadium on the SDSM&T campus (kick-off at 1 p.m.). Admission to the game is free for all active-duty military, veterans and their families. You'll just need to show proof of military service (e.g., VA card, DD214, military ID card, gold star on S.D. driver's license, etc.).

The SDSM&T Veterans Club normally hosts a free tailgate party before and during the game for all veterans and active duty military.

FREE ENTRANCE DAY AT NATIONAL PARKS

The National Park Service invites all visitors to remember our veterans by visiting any National Park Service site for free on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2018.

Area National Parks participating include: Devils Tower National Monument (free monument entrance), Badlands National Park (free park entrance), Wind Cave National Park (free cave tours, based on availability), and Jewel Cave National Monument (free cave tours, based on availability).

More details are posted online at <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/fee-free-parks.htm>.



VA SURVEY SHOWS HIGH CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN BURIALS AND MEMORIALS

The results of a recent [VA customer survey](#) indicates Veterans and their families continue to experience high customer satisfaction in burial and memorial services for veterans and families from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

NCA's annual survey to Veterans, families and funeral directors, which was released at the end of September and covers fiscal year 2018, revealed the following:

- The administration scored in the high 90th percentile in customer service and cemetery appearance, with 98.2 percent of all respondents saying they were satisfied with their experience at the national cemetery;
- 98.7 percent of respondents noted they would recommend VA national cemeteries to Veteran families during their time of need; and
- 99 percent of respondents said the appearance of their VA national cemetery was excellent.



“National Cemetery Administration staff continue to provide world-class burial and memorial services at VA cemeteries, delivering, earning and sustaining the trust of veterans and families,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The employees’ commitment to excellence in customer service results in an experience that is consistently positive for veterans and their families in terms of ease, effectiveness and emotional resonance.”

NCA has a well-established culture of customer service, and has ranked first in customer satisfaction among the nation’s top corporations and federal agencies in an [independent survey](#) conducted by the CFI Group six consecutive times, most recently in 2016.

The VA continues to pride itself on hiring veterans and attributes its high satisfaction scores to having 76.7 percent of NCA employees being veterans themselves.

The VA operates 136 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries. The VA also provides funding to establish, expand, improve and maintain 111 veterans cemeteries in 48 states, tribal trust lands and U.S. territories, including Guam and Saipan.

For veterans not buried in a VA national cemetery, the VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2017, the VA honored more than 361,892 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

VA/DOD ROLLOUT ALIGNED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

The U.S. Secretaries of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DOD) signed a [joint statement](#) Sept. 26 pledging that their two departments will align their plans, strategies and structures as they roll out a new electronic health records (EHR) system that will allow VA and DOD to share patient data seamlessly.

Signed by Defense Secretary James N. Mattis and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the joint statement reinforces both departments' commitment to ensuring the successful transition from a legacy patient-data system to a modernized one that will continue to support active-duty service members, veterans and their families.

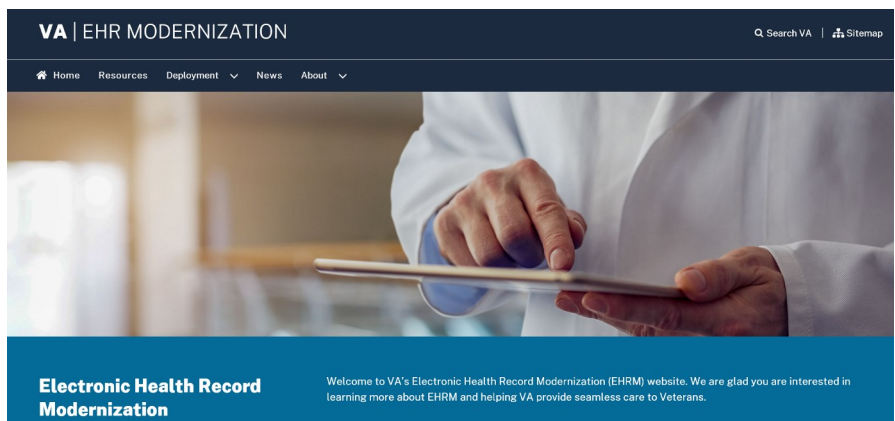
"The joint statement between DOD and VA represents tangible evidence of our commitment to change how we deliver veteran-focused, provider-friendly care," Wilkie said. "The new EHR system will be interoperable with DOD, while also improving the VA's ability to collaborate and share information with community care providers. This will ease the burden on service members as they transition from military careers and will be supported by multiple medical providers throughout their lives."

The VA signed a contract with Cerner Corp. May 17 to replace the VA's 40-year-old legacy Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture (VistA) health care records technology over the next 10 years with the new Cerner system, which is in the pilot phase at DOD. Collaborating with DOD will ensure that VA: understands the challenges encountered as DOD deploys its EHR system called Military Health System GENESIS (MHS GENESIS); adapts an approach by applying lessons learned to anticipate and mitigate known issues; assesses prospective efficiencies to help deploy faster; and delivers an EHR that is fully interoperable.

"We are committed to partnering with the VA to support the lifetime care of our service members, veterans and their families," Mattis said. "This modern electronic health record will ensure those who serve our nation have quality health care as they transition from service member to veteran."

"The EHR will give health care providers a full picture of patient medical history, driving better clinical outcomes," Wilkie said. "It will also help us identify veterans proactively who are at higher risk for issues, such as opioid addiction and suicide, so health care providers can intervene earlier and save lives."

For more information about VA's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, go to www.ehrm.va.gov.



VA CHOLESTEROL STUDY

In the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) drive to help improve lives of veterans through health care discovery and innovation, a team led by VA researchers recently identified three genetic mutations that govern cholesterol levels, which could lead to the development of new drugs to treat cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Detailed results of the study can be found in the [Oct. 1 issue of Nature Genetics](#), a scientific journal.

"This is fantastic news, not just for Veterans, but for all Americans suffering from these diseases," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA researchers have been improving the lives of veterans and all Americans through health care discovery and innovation for decades. Their groundbreaking research has resulted in three Nobel prizes and numerous other national and international honors."

Using data from VA's [Million Veteran Program \(MVP\)](#), the researchers found that three genes — PDE3B, PCSK9 and ANGPTL4 — could be targets for treatment of heart disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm and diabetes, respectively. VA research showed that those with specific mutations to the genes had better cholesterol and triglyceride levels than those without the mutations.

The PDE3B mutation appears to protect against heart disease. A mutation in PCSK9 seems to decrease the risk not only of heart disease, but also abdominal aortic aneurysm — a condition in which the aorta is enlarged, which could lead it to rupture and cause life-threatening bleeding. The ANGPTL4 mutation was linked to lower risk of Type 2 diabetes. The research was supported by the VA, the National Institutes of Health and Stanford's Department of Medicine.



MVP is a national, voluntary research program funded by [VA's Office of Research and Development](#). MVP partners with veterans receiving care in the [Veterans Health Administration](#) to study how genes affect health. As of late September 2018, MVP had enrolled more than 700,000 veterans. It is already one of the world's largest databases of health and genomic information.

The Nature Genetics publication is one of the first major papers describing scientific findings from MVP. The publication highlights the power of researchers having access to data from large numbers of individuals. In this instance, researchers were able to identify several novel genetic factors that affect people's blood lipid [cholesterol and triglyceride] levels. Such findings may lead to new approaches to diagnose people at risk for cardiovascular disease, as well as identify candidate therapeutic targets.

To learn more about VA research, including MVP, visit www.research.va.gov.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 12-13—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Dept. Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street) - Sioux Falls
Oct 15—Sioux Falls City Council Meeting—2nd Reading of Land Gifting for State Veterans Cemetery
Oct 19—Open House new Spirit Lake CBOC—3:00 pm (CT)
Oct 23—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters (209 N. Garfield Ave.—Sioux Falls) - 10:00 am (CT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day Community Program—Lincoln High School—Sioux Falls—10:30 am (CT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day Last Call Ceremony—SFVAHCS—1:30 pm (CT)
Nov 12—State Offices Closed
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)
Nov 16—Dakota Dunes CBOC Open House—2:00 pm (CT)
Nov 22-23—State Offices Closed
Dec 4—Governor's Budget Address—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)
Dec 10—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 24-25—State Offices Closed
Dec 31—Jan 1—State Offices Closed
Jan 8—Governor's State of the State—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 13-18—VFW Accredited Service Officer Training—Annapolis, MD
Feb 8-10—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish
Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL



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